Minimum Wages and Democracy

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HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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THE FOOD SITUATION

Several leading newspapers have severely criticized Shri Munshi for his unconvincing defence of the food situation in the country and the deaths due to want of food in Bihar. People are justified in resenting his explanations, which want in frankness as well as sufficient realization of the distress of the people. It would have been better, if he had candidly confessed that after taking over charge of the Food Ministry he found that, whatever his departmental files might say, the food situation of the country was very desperate, and he wanted the voluntary help of every better-placed province and better-situated section of the people to cope with the situation; and that unless this was done, the Government by itself would not be able to save the people from hunger. In the extensive and frequent movements from one end of the country to the other during the short period since his entry into the Cabinet, he could have organized influential Relief Committees of persons, in whose honesty *people* could trust, to collect whatever grain was available in every part of the country, in addition to that procured by the various Governments. He could have managed with the Transport Ministry for quick and free transfer by railways, motor-trucks, aeroplanes etc., of such collections to deficit areas. I hope Shri Munshi is well aware that however high an opinion the ministers might entertain for their servants and for the Congress Committees, *these* have lost all credit for honesty and efficiency in the eyes of the people. Even if this loss of credit were not fully justifiable, it is a reality, and therefore, in order to serve the people, the Government must seek co-operation of more popular agencies.

But even if Government do not do this, people must do it for the sake of themselves and their starving poor. Leading citizens outside the Government should organize Relief Boards and undertake the work through trustworthy volunteers. They should seek Government co-operation for loosening controls and free transport facilities. If the Relief Boards are strong, efficient and trusted by the pepole, Government cannot refuse to give them full facilities. If they attempted to obstruct the people's committees, they would come to grief. This is the way relief work was always organized during the last generation, whenever a severe calamity befell the people of any province. The famine in North Gujarat last year was combated and the present flood calamity of Cutch and Saurashtra is being met to a large extent with the help of popular bodies.

Wardha, 2-8-'50 K. G. MASHRUWALA

NOTES

Fifteenth August

Independence

The Fifteenth of August is a day of happy and sorrowful memories. There was the satisfaction born of the fulfilment of the long-cherished desire of independence; and there was gloom by reason of the division of the country and two of its provinces. There was merriment and rejoicing in the major part of the country; while, unknown to the enjoyers, in other regions of the country a terrible tragedy had commenced. Thus independence was born in All-India amidst hilarity and moaning. Nevertheless, the midnight preceding the 15th of August saw the realization of a great dream of the nation. Like the division of an organic cell, the people became divided into two independent units. But owing to the tainted means involved in the process, the people of both the regions have passed three years of their new status in a very unenviable manner. One does not know what adversities are still in store for us in the next few years. But even if it be 10 p.m. of a dark and advancing night, we may be quite sure that the night will break into a cheerful morning. How soon it will come depends upon the moral revolution within us.

Mahadev Desai

The Fifteenth of August is the reminder also of Bapu's faithful and dear son, Mahadev Desai, who became his first offering in the last struggle for India's independence. He was born on 1st January 1892; at the age of 25, on the morning of 31st August 1917, Bapu plunged him "in an ocean of love, surprise and joy" by addressing him as follows:

> "There is a reason for asking you to report yourself daily to me. I have tested your worth during the last three days. I have found the young man whom I was in search of for the last two years. Will you believe it? I wanted someone to whom I

could one day entrust all my work and rest in peace; one on whom I could lay myself down with a sense of relief. I have found that one in you."

Mahadevbhai accepted the invitation with an equally high spirit of devotion, and dedicated his all in the service of the Master. For the rest of the remaining 25 years of his short life, he served Bapu and fulfilled his expectations of him in a manner in which none could surpass him. He died in the service of his Master, under circumstances which left none but Bapu himself for the performance of his funeral ceremonies. It was a life nobly lived and nobly ended.

Births and Deaths

There is nothing peculiar about the 15th of August as such. But man likes certain rounded numerals better than others; and selects such dates for commencement of new programmes. Thus the 1st and the 15th of a month, Sunday and Monday of a week, are more favoured than other days. Man also likes to associate accidental coincidences of events. Hence it is that the birth of Shri Aravinda, the deaths of Mahadevbhai, Deshabhakta Konda Venkatappayya and others all taking place on the 15th of August assume particular importance to their friends and admirers. All that one can say is it is a human sentiment, by itself innocent. One, however, need not be superstitious about such coincidences of time and place and make a capital of them.

Wardha, 2-8-'50

Helpless Looting

Shri Gopalakrishna Mallik from Bihar (Dist. Bhagalpur) writes:

"For weeks past there has been going on here, in parts of the Poornia and Bhagalpur Districts in Bihar, mass-looting of food-grains on account of their excessive dearness and acute shortage. People in their hundreds and thousands approach in large bodies the houses of the rich having food-grains in their possession and demand food, and on their refusal plunder it. This looting they carry out right during daytime. They seize foodstuffs only, without touching money or any other articles. Those who willingly agree to part with foodstuffs and give them are spared from the looting. For one thing, food is not available and there is poverty to boot. Moreover, due to shortage of food one has generally to go hungry even when there is money. The problem is getting more and more acute everyday. Government officials are trying their best to resolve it. They plead with the rich for showing some generosity and even compel them to do so. Surely, there is no other go. The acute distress of the people has launched them on the difficult path of revolution, which it is difficult and impossible to stop.

"This part is so fertile that there was no possibility of this starvation and famine visiting it. But as jute and tobacco fetch more money these money-crops occupied last year well nigh 60 per cent of the total arable land. There was no embargo on the export of food-grains nor were any imported. One more difficulty arose in that the *rabbi* crop due in *Baishakh* (April-May) utterly failed this year for want of rain; and consequently, as soon as the month set in, an acute shortage of food-grains was felt and looting of foodstuffs began. Landholders and farmers holding large areas of land have less corn with them this year than ordinarily. Hence they are not inclined to part with food-grains even as loan for various reasons. Such is the condition of helplessness before us and both the poor and the moneyed are starving for want of food. Public workers and Government officials are hard pressed to it in finding a solution of this acute problem.

"If the rich and the capitalists do not change with the times, if they do not become generous, then to be sure, the excessive helplessness of the people will compel them to dispossess the rich, by force, of the food-grains in their possession.

"Such is the problem that has arisen here today. Due to this problem of hunger the helpless looting is on the increase. This is a widespread and urgent problem. Please let us know what in your opinion is the duty of *Sarvodaya* workers under the circumstances."

In my opinion Government officials with the help and co-operation of *Sarvodaya* workers should prevail upon those in possession of stocks of food-grains to donate or sell them at nominal price and with these stocks should open grain shops in the rural areas and after ascertaining the condition of the people should issue ration cards and distribute food-grains to them according to their condition, i.e. gratis, or at cheap rates, or at cost price as the case may be. Along with this they should advise the agriculturists to raise food crops.

Wardha, 13-7-'50.

(*Translated from Hindi*)

Bihar Deaths

Even in my secluded place at Wardha I received information some three months ago that the condition of the people in Bhagalpur was desperate and as a last resort they had begun looting granaries of food. These things took place with the full knowledge of the local authorities and the Congress workers. If the food was sufficient, and the question was only of exorbitant prices, were any steps taken to open free or cheap-rate shops? If not, why was this not done and who is responsible for it? On the contrary, I believe the Government machinery must have been employed to suppress the hungry crowds with the long arm of the law. The nature of this loot was, according to the information I had then received, that the raiders did not care to touch anything else than food. My correspondent's letter, which I was unable to forward for publication in the *Harijan Sevak* until some time ago for sheer want of space, is published elsewhere in translation.

The "Grow More Food Campaign" was declared some days ago to be so complete a success, that the Government substituted in its place the "Grow More Cotton Campaign". Shri Munshi on taking charge of the Food Ministry spoke not much of growing more food; he stressed growing more trees and eating more vegetables and dispensing as much as possible with cereals. How can he realize the dire poverty

of the people, who do not often get even an onion to eat with their bread? It is like the fabled opium-eater king, who advised his subjects to eat *barfi* and *pedas* (dairy sweets), to get over the famine! Where is the good of having sufficient quantities of food, if they do not reach the hungry?

Wardha, 1-8-'50

Birthday Yarn

Shri Narandas Gandhi writes:

"I am glad to report that in response to my appeal for yarn contributions for the Sevagram Ashram, Shri Ramkrishna Jaju of Sholapur has set the ball rolling by sending to me 111 hanks of yarn, which he received from his friends and admirers on his last birthday. This is very encouraging.

"I request all those, who will spin on the next *Charkha Jayanti* Day (8th October) to send their yarn of the day to me for the above fund."

Shri Ramkrishna Jaju's example is worthy of imitation for all those who allow or suffer a public or semi-public celebration of their birthdays. Those, who are not mindful of their own dates of birth, will do well to adopt Gandhiji's for the above purpose.

Wardha, 1-8-'50

A Bad Mistake

Referring to my article "Cattle-keeping in Cities" (29th July), a friend has very promptly and rightly drawn my attention to the wrong arithmetic involved in the statement, "even if the average death rate of calves comes to 4 per day, and that every cow or buffalo yields a calf every year, it means that not a single calf born in the centre will grow up to be a full animal." He points out that 4×365 is 1,460 and not 14,600 as evidently calculated by me to equate it with 15,000 head of cattle maintained at Are. Even if the average death rate comes to 10 per day, the number would be 3,650. I confess I have made a bad mistake, and am sorry for it, though another correspondent, who also calls my attention to this mistake, points out that my assumption that every cow or buffalo would yield a calf every year is gratuitous. In city dairies, on an average, an animal must be reckoned as fructifying once in two years only. He, therefore, supports the contention that there should be no dairies in cities. Anyway, there is sufficient room for improvement of the living conditions of the cattle at Are, but my original argument loses its force by reason of my mistake.

Wardha, 1-8-'50 K. G. M.

Khadi Tools Exhibition

The fourth Khadi Tools Exhibition will be organized this year in the third week of November in Tamilnad. Persons who have made any new improvements or inventions in Khadi tools (i.e. all tools ancillary to Khadi manufacture, such as ginning, carding, spinning, double twisting, weaving etc.) will notify about them to the undersigned by 30th September, 1950. As far as possible they will be given an opportunity of exhibiting their improvements at the Exhibition, and if the Khadi Tool Improvements Committee deem fit useful improvements will be rewarded in a suitable manner.

Sevagram (Wardha) SECRETARY,
All-India Spinners' Association.

Education of the Deaf-Blind

Among the thousands of this year's graduates of American universities there is none whose achievements are more remarkable than those of 24-year-old Robert Joseph Smithdas. Totally blind and deaf since childhood, he was one of the 15 graduates in a class of 1,595 students on whom St. John's University of Brooklyn, New York, conferred the Bachelor of Arts degree "with highest honours". He is believed to be the first person with this double disability to earn a university degree since the world-renowned Helen Keller graduated in 1904.

The son of a steel worker, he has lived in a world of darkness and silence since suffering an attack of meningitis at the age of five. All that Smithdas has learned has been through his sense of touch. Many able and devoted guides have taught him to read lips with his finger tips, to master the manual alphabet which conveys words through varying pressures on the hand, and to read braille.

In this way he completed a secondary school course in an institute for those who are deaf and blind, became expert in several handicrafts, and earned a scholarship that enabled him to enter St. John's University.

At his side when he graduated was his classmate and companion, John J. Spanier. Because of the time he had spent translating oral lectures into the manual alphabet and transcribing lecture notes into braille for his friend, Spanier was obliged to postpone his own graduation until next year. Then the two plan to devote their lives to aiding the blind and deaf.

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HARIJAN

Aug. 12 1950

MINIMUM WAGES AND DEMOCRACY

For the first time in our country there is an attempt to regulate minimum wages. Although it is now more than two years since the Minimum Wages Act was brought into force the Provincial Governments have not found it possible to implement the provisions of the Act.

To fix the minimum wage the Government is launching out on a most elaborate survey to find out the condition of the workers. This procedure becomes necessary under the western methods of work and payment. That is not a humanitarian system but one in which the employer seeks to part with as little as he can out of the total production. Minimum wage calculated on this basis is always a bone of contention. It leads to industrial disputes and ill-feeling, hatred and jealousy between capital and labour. The result is that the labourer strives to give as little as he can and demands as much as he thinks he wants. This system is based on violence. Therefore what is called for is to fix the minimum wage at a level so as to assure the animal needs of the worker which should be calculated on the basis of a balanced diet for the whole year, adequate clothing and sufficient shelter. While calculating in this manner, the oft-repeated slogan of "capacity to pay" does not arise. If an industry is not capable of paying its workers sufficient to keep their body and soul together on a reasonable standard that industry can have no claim for existence. If such an industry is indispensable in the national interest it should be subsidized by the State so as to provide a minimum return of our conception to the workers. Capacity to pay can be a factor in our consideration only where bonus is to be paid over and above the minimum wage.

We are glad to notice that the Central Labour Advisory Board, which met lately in Delhi, have decided that the benefit of the law should be extended to agricultural labour also by March 1951. This is a logical step, as agriculture is the foundation of all our economic life. It is unthinkable that such a pivotal section of our life should be based on exploitation. To fix minimum wages in organized industries without regulating the return that the agricultural labour gets is to build the house upside down. All industries in the final analysis depend on the earth for their raw materials; but today owing to the prevalence of money economy minimum wages in centralized industries are fixed, not on the cost of agricultural products, but empirically. The budget of the worker largely consists of the cost of agricultural products and, therefore, it is imperative that the cost of agricultural production should be fixed first and wages determined afterwards. At the present time there is no data in regard to agricultural costs. Even agricultural labour conditions are hardly known. What is done is to prepare an index of the prices of certain articles in the industrial sector which are commonly consumed by workers and thereby determine the price of agricultural products with reference to old prices that prevailed during a past year which is considered as normal. Under such circumstances there is no reality in our computations.

As a consequence of all this agricultural labour today is practically starved. They get hardly enough nourishment to make up even the energy they expend. In many places all over our country conditions of near slavery exist. A landless labourer may borrow from his landlord a paltry sum of about Rs 50/- to Rs 100/- and this will bind him to his lender till he repays, which may mean a lifetime slavery. Such a person would get gruel once a day and some clothing at *Deepavali* while his wife and children will have to find their keep on similar terms either with the same landlord or elsewhere. In the food they eat there is hardly any nourishment. Hence they have no resistance against diseases and the children grow up emaciated. Can such a population work and produce enough to feed the nation? The Government is very nervous of attempts made by others to improve the conditions of such people. They fear that making labour conscious of its primary needs will effect the procurement plan. Is this a programme to feed the well-to-do at the cost of the producer? Such a policy is a short-sighted one and will not serve its purpose in the long run.

Justice and fair play, leave alone humanitarian considerations, require that those who produce food should first be fed adequately and when any surplus is found that alone should be available to feed others. This minimum that is to be given to the labourer should be a first charge and would become the minimum wage. In fixing it there can be no limitations and no outside consideration should deviate us from the right path. Unfortunately, at the present time, both the powers that be and the vested interests in land are literally taking the bread out of the mouths of these helpless millions. Any attempt to ameliorate their condition is opposed by the Government with all their might. About the same time as the Central Labour Advisory Board was deciding to extend to agricultural labour the provisions of the Minimum Wages Act, the Magistrate of Madhurai *Taluka* was busy passing a prohibitory order banning the assemblage of five or more persons in Othakadai *Firka*. This is calculated to safeguard the interests of landlords and prevent disputes with their tenants regarding the lease and *waram* terms and the eviction of existing tenants. It is claimed that the order has been passed to maintain public tranquility and to help the grow-more-

food campaign! Is the Government so ignorant of human psychology that it does not understand that such procedures can only lead to bitterness and division amongst the village people, which will not be conducive to contentment and consequent better production? This kind of bungling without understanding the human aspect of the question only sows the seeds of a revolution. We hope wiser counsels will prevail.

They tell us "agriculture does not pay." Which industry will pay if the owner draws 50 per cent of the *gross* yield? In some places the landlords get up to 75 per cent even. In all organized industries no proprietor ever draws on the basis of total turnover or the amount of sales. In the best of industries the gross profit will be hardly ever over 30 per cent and the net profit, after paying all expenses will be, naturally, a fraction of it. Here we see clearly the reason why there is little or nothing left to pay land labour. We have to place agriculture on a business basis. This the absentee landlords are not willing to do. Even the highest government functionary has the audacity to say, "If we work out agricultural costs we cannot have any procurement." As though that is a valid reason why agricultural labour should be so low-paid and starved! A capitalist says, "If you raise agricultural wages who will come to work in industries?" So both ways agriculture is hit. If the economically ignorant farmers are shown the anomaly of the situation Government comes in with a prohibitory order! Is this our brand of democracy and social justice?

J. C. KUMARAPPA

HINDI-HINDUSTANI CONTROVERSY AGAIN

A correspondent from Saurashtra reports that teachers of the Hindustani Prachar Sabha were advised by a prominent jurist and office-holder that the Constitution of India had once for all buried Hindustani and declared in favour of Sanskrit-based Hindi. When his attention was drawn to the reference to Hindustani in the Constitution, he said that they should trust him in the interpretation of the law. This has created a stir among Hindustani teachers of Saurashtra.

It is regrettable to find that recently the Hindi-Hindustani controversy is being revived in its offensive forms in Bombay and Saurashtra. It is further regrettable that it is encouraged by people in responsible positions. It was expected that after the laying down of an agreed formula in the Constitution about the name, structure and script of the national language, all institutions engaged in propagating the national language in areas where it is not the mother-tongue of the people and all writers of the national language would settle down to spread the language and develop the literature, if not in some common form, at least in a form which they prefer, without running down one another. The national language of India must be conceived of as a mighty ocean, in which hundreds of rivers and rivulets can pour their treasures without making it too full or foul. It need not say 'no' to any contributor, and should not make itself dependent upon any one source, however great. There is as much scope for lovers and scholars of Sanskrit to enrich Hindi, as for those of Arabic, Persian, English, or any of the Dravidian and Adivasi languages. The various spoken languages and dialects of other provinces would make their contributions also. Some of the contributions may be short-lived and fail to become current; some might become its irremovable content. The Constitution has laid down in definite terms

> "the duty of the Union......to develop the language (i.e. Hindi) so as to serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the *composite culture of India* and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India, and drawing wherever necessary or desirable, for its vocabulary, primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages."

But even if the Constitution had done nothing of the kind, no other result was possible, unless the Government of India became a Fascist organization run by a party of *Vedic*-Sanskritists. This stage, however short its duration, is not altogether unlikely in the future that lies before us. But, so far as I can see, it would have to bring into play all such methods of repression and torture as were once used by *Vedists* to prevent *Shudras* from hearing the *Vedas*, now for the opposite purpose, namely, for uttering words of non-Sanskrit origin. In the interest of Hindi itself and also of Sanskrit, the protagonists of Sanskritized Hindi would do well to observe restraint in their speech. No one can deprive Sanskrit of its due place in the development of Hindi. And it will necessarily be the place of honour. But vituperation of Hindustani or other styles might create a reaction detrimental to the cause of both Hindi and Sanskrit.

A word to Hindustani workers. There is no need for them to feel disheartened by taunting remarks of adverse politicians, however great their position or influence in the Government. They need not worry even about the interpretation of the Constitution. Languages are not made by legal enactments alone, and by administrators and interpreters of law. They are made primarily by the people and secondarily by popular writers. Law comes last. Namadev and Tukaram were no grammarians and scholars, nor were Akho, Bhojo, Dayaram and others. But if their languages and styles have become current, grammarians and scholars have to write grammars which will declare their usages as having been in conformity with the genius of the language. Gujarati scholars of 1920 thought

that Gandhiji's Gujarati style was boyish. Gujarati scholars of 1950 now study it for getting their M.A. and doctorate degrees, and will vie with one another to find its beauties. Even his original Hindi writings will some day form the subject of a thesis. Let them therefore sit down to produce literature, which the people must read and study and, if possible, enjoy while doing so. The language which they write will become the standard language whatever legal, political or communal *pandits* might say.

Indeed, if we are serious about creating a national language for all-India, there are more important things to do than the mere coining of new and difficult words from Sanskrit in place of commonly used Hindustani, Persian or Prakrit ones. Speaking is as important as writing the national language. If the pronunciations and modes of script writing take different styles from province to province even the same language becomes difficult to follow in speech and to decipher in writing. Hindi is being propagated all over India for the last quarter of a century or more. It is taught through *Devanagari*. But has any attention been paid to ensure that the Assamese, the Bengali, the Panjabi, the Bihari, and the South and West Indians — all have similar pronunciations of the Hindi they speak and similar ways of scribing the *Devanagari* they write? It is possible to say from the handwriting of the scribe what province he belongs to. And it is often difficult to decipher the *Devanagari* of some of these provinces. In particular, North Indians write their *Devanagari* as if it was a script written by those who were habituated to write the Urdu script. Generally it is as negligently, inelegantly and illegibly written as hurried scribblings of Urdu. It is only Maharashtra which teaches careful and elegant shaping of *Devanagari* letters.

The pronunciations also vary from province to province. Except in Maharashtra and South India scant attention is paid to the purity of pronunciation even of the mother-tongue. But these provinces (as also Gujarat) pronounce Hindi not as the Hindis speak, and so they mispronounce it. It is so, because they do not hear it spoken by Hindis, and the pronunciation of some letters in Hindi and Sanskrit differ. Faulty pronunciations and negligent formation of script letters lead to mistakes in the written language also. If those who work in the cause of Hindi will study these problems, they will find less time to engage themselves in idle controversies. There is enough work for half a dozen independent institutions like the Rashtra Bhasha Prachar, Hindustani Prachar and other *Sabhas* to do for the development of the National Language, without quarrelling with one another. Indeed, they can co-operate in some of the items of work.

Wardha, 31-7-'50 K. G. MASHRUWALA

TAMILNAD CONSTRUCTIVE WORKERS' CONFERENCE

[The following are some of the resolutions passed at the above conference on 2-7-'50:]

Resolution 4: Resolved that the Tamilnad Constructive Workers' Association be formed into the Tamilnad Sarva Seva Sangh and that the Provincial Constructive Workers' Association and institutions like the *ashrams* be affiliated to this Sarva Seva Sangh.

Resolved further that Shri K. Arunachalam be requested to promote the formation of this Sangh.

Resolution 5: Since rice, sugar and *vanaspati* mills upset the economy of our village life apart from affecting adversely the health of our people, this Conference resolves that Congress Committees and Constructive Workers' Associations and institutions should mobilize public opinion for the using of hand-pounded rice, jaggery and hand-pressed oil and also request the Government through resolutions formed in public meetings not to permit the installation of new mills or the renovation of old ones. This Conference also resolves that in institutions like hostels, jails, etc. conducted by the Government and hostels and *ashrams* conducted by the Constructive Workers' Associations only village products like hand-pounded rice, *ghani*-pressed oil and jaggery should be used.

In order to promote the hand-pounding of rice this Conference requests the Government to repeal the surcharge and Sales-tax on hand-pounded rice.

This Conference notes that in the *firkas* chosen by the Government for development work, rice mills are not allowed to operate, but are allowed in the neighbouring towns, thereby defeating the very purpose of their action. This Conference resolves therefore that no mill should be allowed to function in the neighbourhood of such *firkas*.

Resolution 6: This Conference resolves that the Government be requested

(1) to give recognition to pre-basic education;

(2) that more basic schools be opened to absorb the increasing number of trained teachers;

(3) that in order that the efficiency of basic schools may not suffer, not more than twenty-five schools be given in the charge of an inspector and that the inspectors should be held responsible to see to the efficiency and full output of the craft work in the schools;

(4) that only those trained in basic education should be permitted to be the inspectors of basic schools;

(5) that the Government should not open any more old-type training schools or give recognition to such schools opened by private agencies, and that in places where basic schools and basic training schools are opened the old type of schools should either be transformed into basic schools or closed down;

(6) that in basic training schools facilities for the agriculture craft be also provided;

(7) that books necessary for basic schools be published without delay.

This Conference feels that the above measures are necessary to promote basic education in the province.

Resolution 7: This Conference requests the Congress and constructive workers to work for the improvement of the lot of Harijans in our villages so many of whom are landless agricultural labourers, forced to be slave-like dependents upon landlords. This Conference requests the Congress and constructive workers to work rigorously for bringing into practical application the legislation of the Government giving equal rights to Harijans to use wells, tanks, rest-houses, hotels, pathways, roads; and also to dissuade Harijans from such unhygienic and harmful practices as eating carrion etc.

Resolution 8: Since the constructive workers of Tamilnad strongly desire to see a rural university opened in Tamilnad in the near future, this Conference constitutes a sub-committee with Shri K. Arunachalam as convener and Messrs R. R. Keithahn, Ramaswamy and M. Arunachalam as members to write out the details and to take the necessary steps with the Government in this connection.

Resolution 10: This Conference realizes in full the importance and need of constructive workers to face the problems of agricultural labour. But this Conference feels that more effort should be made to collect and complete statistics regarding this question. In order to formulate a plan to settle the problems of land in different parts of Tamilnad in a uniform way this Conference appoints a sub-committee consisting of Shri S. Jagannathan, R. R. Keithahn and K. P. V. Giri and requests them to submit a report to this Conference within three months. It is the opinion of this Conference that a programme for the solution of the land problem should be formulated in the light of the report of this committee.

SERVICE OF THE DEFECTIVES

Shri Ishwarlal Mehta, the writer of the following letter, is deaf and dumb from his childhood, but has been fortunate to receive education in India and abroad. He selected as his wife a lady suffering from the same incapacity, but intelligent and fairly trained. Both of them are now able to follow our speech from the movement of our lips and speak with some difficulty. Both of them are anxious to serve people with similar defects. Shri Mehta complained to me that under the rules framed under the Constitution of India, the deaf and dumb, and the blind did not enjoy the adult franchise, and that this injustice should be removed. I made enquiries and was glad to be infomed by the Government of India that no such legal disability attached to these defectives. I communicated it to Shri Mehta. Shri Mehta now writes:

"I note with interest, being a deaf and dumb man, that the deaf and dumb person is not disqualified for the purposes of being registered as a voter unless he or she is of unsound mind. This right though essential and far reaching falls short of our basic requirements.

"A normal person is offered free education and he can equip himself as a citizen willing to participate in the civic and national life. He can get his living in a number of ways and even if he is not actually earning, his life is looked after by his relations. Also, in the present set-up of Indian society, a normal person, provided he has a minimum of natural gifts, can look after himself and can satisfy his every-day wants.

"The deaf and dumb and in many respects the blind are on a different footing. Hearing to an illiterate man lessens his many difficulties and keeps him in touch with the society he is living in, provided he cares to do so. But a man who cannot hear is a burden to society, if he is illiterate and uninitiated.

"A totally deaf person, if he is not educated, becomes mute, neglected and finally of unsound mind as he is unable to communicate his thoughts to people around in a way which is intelligible to them. A man's principal means of communication are speech and writing. For a man who can speak, writing is not as important. But a man who cannot speak and hear loses all contact with life if he cannot read or write.

"Thus I hope you will agree with me that this right of voting is meaningless to a deaf and dumb person, if he or she cannot read or write. Literacy to a handicapped deaf and dumb person thus becomes absolutely necessary.

"Another difficulty that an adult deaf and dumb faces is his problem of livelihood. Probably vocational training might help him to establish himself in life.

"It was with a dual purpose of procuring facilities of *literacy* and *vocational* training for the unfortunate deaf and dumb that I approached the Government of Bombay more than a year back. The Government is sympathetic, but evidently unable to do much. In India, it seems the blind has succeeded in attracting public sympathy and co-operation and many public institutions are in the field. While extending our sincere gratitude to those who have taken up the cause of the blind, we feel the deaf and dumb should also be looked after.

"There are very few institutions established in this province for the benefit of the deaf and dumb, and some of those that are established care more for personal profit than for the education of these defectives. It is the business of the State to provide adequate facilities in this regard. Such facilities should include not merely compulsory primary education, but the secondary and the higher education as well, and also vocational training, which would enable these unfortunates to eke out a living for themselves. For this purpose Government should set up a Committee to consider the present position of the existing schools for the defectives and ways and means to improve them. And, since, in the methods of teaching the blind and the deaf, we are too backward in India as compared to the western countries, steps should be taken not merely for the establishment of institutions for the training of teachers for these defectives, but also an educationist of some standing should be deputed to America and other advanced western countries for studying the methods of teaching adopted in those countries."

I endorse Shri Mehta's cause. The service of defectives among whom might be included not only the blind and the deaf and dumb, but also persons wanting in essential limbs like hands and legs, and those suffering from deformities like the hunchback can justifiably be regarded as an item of the constructive programme.

But it is too much to expect that governments can initiate all such essential services departmentally. These are activities of a missionary type. They have to be initiated and in the main carried on by persons, who have dedicated their lives to a cause and are determined to serve it even single-handedly with such resources as might be available to them. Philanthropists and governments begin to take interest after such self-appointed servants have organized these to a certain degree. But even when governments take up the responsibility, they would always need the services of workers who have dedicated themselves to the cause out of pure love. If Shri and Shrimati Mehta and other educated defectives and their friends make the service of the defectives the mission of their life, I believe government and philanthropists would also contribute their aid liberally. I understand that the Government of India have already done some work in this matter.

Wardha, 15-7-'50 K. G. MASHRUWALA

WHY IS THE MUSLIM HATED ?

"In your article of 20th May, 1950, you have mentioned some reasons to show why non-Hindus hate Hindus. But you must be aware that Hindus do not hate (or rather I should say dislike) all non-Hindus so strongly as they do Muslims. Will you say why it is so? Surely there must be something very wrong with the Muslims to deserve it."

There is no doubt that bigotry, fanaticism and intolerance, accompanied with outrageous conduct towards Hindu women and the slaughter of the cow, particularly during wars and communal riots, are important reasons for these. Barring exceptions, these are grave moral and social defects, which have generally accompanied the Crescent and the Star, in the same way as the wine bottle and imperialism have accompanied the Cross.

This is to the debit side of the Muslim. But there was also another reason which, although it was to his credit side, adversely affected the privileges and vested interests of the upper-class Hindus, and made them regard the Muslim as their particular enemy. The lower Hindu class found its liberation from subordination to upper classes by embracing Islam. It freed it considerably, if not completely, from a hundred religious and semi-religious practices and superstitions, caste and social subservience and almost politico-economic slavery to the upper class. The upper class thus lost its control over the convert. Backed by political protection for a long period in the beginning, the convert got a status superior to his unconverted cousin and became strong enough to resist the tyranny of the upper-class Hindu, who practically ruled the society in the economic sphere. How strong and tyrannical this control must have been in the past ages can be imagined from what still prevails in the villages. The process of losing the religious, political and economic hold by the *Mahajans* (*Brahman*, *Rajput* and *Vaishya panchayats*) commenced with the advent of Islam, and so their dislike of the Muslim was natural. This may be compared to the dislike of Labour and Proletarian movements by the landlord and capitalist class. There are thus religious, moral, political, social and economic reasons for the ill-feeling. For restoration of goodwill, the ordinary Muslim must shed his fanaticism and improve his moral conduct. At the same time, Hindus must give up thinking in terms of high and low, accept the lowest *bhangi* as equal in social status to the reciter of the *Vedas* and allow him to stay in his neighbourhood and share with him the same table and set of vessels in hotels and the same well in the villages. He must relinquish his customary right to treat the artisan and the Harijan as a semi-slave and a sub-human being not entitled to dress and move about in the same way as himself.

There is a curious paradox in this connection. The thoughtful and really godly Muslims and *Sufis* are often quite generous, noble-minded, of high moral character, and free from intolerance; the bigotry and narrow-mindedness is spread among the masses and their ignorant *maulvis* and learned demagogues. But in Hinduism, whether of the *Vedic*, Jain, Sikh or any other denomination, bigotry and intolerance are qualities which are developed with devotion to and scholarship of books, and tolerance and goodwill are the qualities of the masses.

Is not the fact that intense and deep study of Hindu scriptures should develop the same kind of narrow-mindedness as the superficial acquaintance of the Quran, while want of deep learning of the *shastras* or their acquaintance through the *bhajans* of devotees only should keep the Hindu level-headed, broad-hearted and open to rational thinking, as if he were a Sufi, a subject which demands our very serious consideration? The Muslim is hated partly because there are undoubtedly some grave drawbacks in the training imparted to him in the name of Islam and partly because it attacks the evil which obstinately persists in Hinduism, inspite of its Buddha, Mahavir, Nanak, Kabir and others and in spite of its *Vedanta*. Upon that evil rest the privileges of the upper classes.

Wardha, 23-7-'50 K. G. MASHRUWALA

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